

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 921  
By Norris

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend Mahaffey White for her remarkable artistic accomplishments.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should salute those citizens who through their extraordinary talent and steadfast efforts have distinguished themselves in their respective fields; and

WHEREAS, Mahaffey White is most assuredly one such outstanding Tennessean who is richly deserving of this body's praise; and

WHEREAS, an accomplished and gifted artist, Mrs. White has been described as "a Memphis treasure" by David Hinkse, co-owner of the Cooper-Young Gallery; and

WHEREAS, for more than three decades, Mrs. White has exhibited her artwork throughout the southwestern region of Tennessee as well as in New York; and

WHEREAS, born in Corinth, Mississippi, in 1911, Mrs. White's family relocated to Memphis a short time later; and

WHEREAS, having the opportunity to attend art classes, her love of art began at a young age and Mrs. White fondly recalls one Christmas when she and her sister were given a dollar each which they used to purchase a Brownie camera; and

WHEREAS, although she enjoyed photography, it was not until later in life that Mrs. White selected this as her primary medium; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. White was instead an aspiring dress designer, designing and making many of her own clothes while she was in grammar school; and

WHEREAS, upon graduating high school, Mrs. White began her matriculation at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1929 only to be forced to leave by the Great Depression; and

WHEREAS, returning to Memphis so as to not be a financial burden on her family, Mrs. White cultivated her skills as a salesperson by selling Victrola records before spending four years as a Dental Assistant; and

WHEREAS, deciding it was time for a change, Mrs. White planned a vacation trip to New York City which soon transformed into plans to relocate to the city; and

WHEREAS, arriving in New York on her 24th birthday, Mrs. White supported herself by temporary jobs with the WPA program and as a shop girl for the Arnold Constable Department Store; and

WHEREAS, in 1936, Mrs. White attained a seasonal job customizing dresses at a Parisian clothing atelier, Henri Bendel; she worked at Henri Bendel for three seasons, returning to Memphis during the summers; and

WHEREAS, it was also in 1936 that, through a mutual friend in Memphis, she met Richard White of Memphis and they were married a short time later; and

WHEREAS, taking the design skills she learned at Henri Bendel, Mrs. White began work with the Butterick Company developing designers' ideas into patterns; and

WHEREAS, it was during this time that Mrs. White met Harriet Fitzgerald, founder of the Abingdon Square Painters; Mrs. White took classes at Fitzgerald's studio and she continues to exhibit her work with the Abingdon group; and

WHEREAS, at the beginning of World War II, Mr. White was drafted and Mrs. White resigned from Butterick in order to stay at home with her young son; from her home she taught dressmaking classes and tried her hand at the dress design business; and

WHEREAS, returning to Memphis in 1950, Mrs. White became very involved in civic issues, especially education; she was instrumental in the founding of the Memphis Better Schools Committee which petitioned for higher teacher salaries, smaller classes, and a fairer distribution of county tax dollars; and

WHEREAS, desiring to continue her own education, Mrs. White began attending classes full time at the Memphis Art Academy and after two years, she earned her Bachelor's degree and then furthered her pursuit of knowledge at Memphis State earning her Master's degree; while completing her studies, Mrs. White designed, created, and sold jewelry; and

WHEREAS, passing her love of art on to a new generation, Mrs. White began a career as an Associate Art Professor at Shelby State teaching a wide array of art courses; and

WHEREAS, upon taking a much deserved retirement in 1981, Mrs. White once again enrolled in classes, this time studying pottery and photography at Shelby State; and

WHEREAS, even as a student herself, Mrs. White has proven to be an inspiration to many aspiring artists; and

WHEREAS, photography has become Mrs. White's primary medium as she continues to provide creative insight and make the world a more joyous and beautiful place through her art; and

WHEREAS, Mahaffey White epitomizes the spirit and commitment that are characteristic of a true Tennessean and has contributed greatly to the creative, artistic, and cultural lives of her fellow citizens; and

WHEREAS, this General Assembly finds it appropriate to pause in its deliberations to acknowledge and applaud Mrs. White for her pursuit of excellence in all her endeavors and for her dedication to the propagation of the arts in Tennessee; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we hereby honor Mahaffey White for her myriad accomplishments, commend her artistry and spirit, and extend to her our heartfelt best wishes for every continued success and happiness.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.